Press Release

October 7, 2016—The American Literary Translators Association (ALTA) is pleased to announce the winners of the 2016 National Translation Awards (NTA) in Poetry and Prose! The award winning titles were officially announced at ALTA's annual conference, held this year at the Marriott Oakland City Center in Oakland, CA from October 6-9, 2016.

This is the eighteenth year for the National Translation Award, which is administered by ALTA, and only the second year to award separate prizes in poetry and prose. The NTA is the only national award for translated fiction, poetry, and literary nonfiction that includes a rigorous examination of both the source text and its relation to the finished English work. This year’s judges for poetry are Adriana Jacobs, Karen Kovacik, and Cole Swensen. This year’s prose judges are Karen Emmerich, Andrea Labinger, and Marian Schwartz. Award selection criteria include the quality of the finished English language book, and the quality of the translation.

Winner: 2016 National Translation Award (NTA) in Prose

Tristano Dies: A Life
By Antonio Tabucchi (Italy)
Translated from the Italian by Elizabeth Harris (Archipelago Books)

Words from the judges: In Antonio Tabucchi’s Tristano Dies, a dying Italian Resistance hero has called a writer to his bedside to tell him the story not of his life—a life of love and war, fidelity and betrayal—but of the mind that lived it. Elizabeth Harris’s English translation is that rare and thrilling instance of transcendent translation that stands, independently, on the same high level as the original, a level Harris sustains through this mesmerizing and thought-provoking text.

Winner: 2016 National Translation Award (NTA) in Poetry

Rilke Shake
By Angélica Freitas (Brazil)
Translated from the Portuguese by Hilary Kaplan (Phoneme Media)

Words from the judges: Freitas’ title, a pun on milkshake, suggests in just three syllables the method of this madly exuberant book. The author shakes and swirls literary modernism (Moore, Stein, Pound, Bishop, Pessoa, Rilke) in a lexical blender of slang, neologisms (“dismallarmament”), spells, and loans from other languages. Hilary Kaplan zooms around each linguistic curve along with the poet, finding inventive solutions to bring into English the sounds, rhythms, play, and verve of the Portuguese. Only this omnivorous appetite for the flavors of words, Freitas implies, can save us from a two-dimensional understanding of history, poetry, and ourselves.

Submissions for the 2017 National Translation Awards will be accepted starting in January 2017. Please visit us at www.literarytranslators.org/awards for more information.